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Tramsig's Plan

By Morrie Mullins

A year ago, a document was posted to Cularin's holonets which, if true, made clear Thaere's intentions with regard to Cularin. The destabilization spoken of in the document - - specifically by Admiral Jir Tramsig - - failed to materialize in quite the way the Thaereians might have hoped (assuming, again, that the document was real), due in no small part to public awareness of the plan's existence. Before the plan could be fully realized, Cularin struck at their protectors, forcing a conflict that many now view as having been inevitable.

Today, a recording was released to Cularin's major media outlets. The release has already garnered a great deal of attention...

Interior, Cularin Central Broadcasting Studios

Yara Grugara sits behind the newsdesk. She is impeccably coiffed and composed, but a smile seems to tug at the corner of her mouth. She folds her hands very deliberately in front of her, glances at her prompter, and speaks.

Yara: Friends, this is Yara Grugara, with a critical news development. Less than an hour ago, Cularin Central Broadcasting received a recording of two voices talking about Cularin and our sovereignty. An accompanying note identified one of the voices as belonging to Thaereian Admiral Jir Tramsig, the individual in charge of Thaere's Navy. The other voice was not identified, and appears to have been masked.

The image of a box covered in plain brown paper fills the screen. The ends of the box have been very carefully cut off, and a recording stick sits beside the box.

Yara (voice-over): Thus far, no group or individual has claimed credit for providing this recording to us. Because we could not initially determine the identities of the parties involved to 100 percent accuracy, Cularin Central Broadcasting delayed sharing the recording with you. However, our technicians have conclusively determined that one of the voices on the recording definitely belongs to Admiral Tramsig. The content of the recording makes it such that we cannot justify failing to share the information.

The box and recording stick disappear, and we again see Yara behind the newsdesk. Her face becomes very grim, and her voice drops as she adopts her "serious broadcaster" persona.

Yara: The conversation is not pleasant. If you are easily angered, please, watch this segment later. It's easy to come away from it with a fairly

strong bloodlust. Yara certainly did.

The screen goes black, and then the following words appear: "This recording has not been modified in any way from its status upon receipt by Cularin Central Broadcasting. We have provided a transcription to accompany the conversation, to better enable our viewers to understand the context and implications of the words they will hear. In this transcription, 'JT' refers to Thaereian Admiral Jir Tramsig, while 'UI' refers to the unidentified individual with whom Tramsig is conversing."

UI: Things in Cularin don't seem to be going particularly well. I'd hoped that you might have settled them by now.

JT: There were some wrinkles. We've managed to smooth them out. I think you'll see that everything is running according to plan once more.

There is a shuffling, as of one or both of the individuals sitting down, followed by the squeaking of the metal feet of a chair along a tile floor. Someone sighs.

UI: If everything were going according to plan, Cularin would no longer be resisting.

JT: Cularin is not your typical target, sir. They have a long history of being difficult to deal with. They fight back if it looks like they're being controlled, even if it's for their own good. They have no appreciation for the opportunity they have to move from a lawless system of malcontents to a peaceful, law-abiding member of the new order.

UI: You seem to forget to whom you are speaking. I've told you before - I hate being called "Sir." And if you decide to tell me about my own plan and its brilliance one more time, I may be forced to harm you. Severely. Permanently.

Someone coughs. Several seconds of silence pass, and even in a voice-only recording, there's clearly tension between the two speakers. Someone shifts in his seat.

JT: I am what I am. I apologize if calling you "Sir" offends you.

UI: No matter. You're right that Cularin was never meant to be an easy mark, but they were meant to be a mark, and one that could be accomplished well before now. I hope I didn't make a mistake by leaving things in your hands. There were others to whom I could have turned, but you convinced me that you and your navy would be best suited to the task. I'm still not quite sure why.

JT: We know Cularin, sir. We've observed them and controlled their trade for three generations. Their borders have been under our control since well before we were granted protectorate status. All of it leading to this moment.

UI: "This moment" passed some time ago. You were supposed to eliminate Cularin. Have you forgotten? They are to be a non-issue. With their pedantic Jedi and their self-proclaimed "heroes," the system should have remained wherever it was when Rivan's toy sent them away. If it had never returned, the

galaxy would have been no worse a place.

JT: I agree completely.

UI: Of course you do, you fool. It's what you do - - agree with your betters. Rather than simply agreeing, answer me one question. I'd advise you to answer it appropriately.

JT: Yes?

UI: How will you fix this mess that you have made of Cularin? How will you quell a revolution that should never have had a chance to exist, let alone grow to this magnitude?

JT: If nothing changes, then I'll kill them.

UI: All of them?

JT: All of them.

UI: Good.

With a "click," the recording ends. Yara and the newsdesk reappear. She isn't even trying to smile, and the flush in her cheeks makes her opinion of what we just heard extremely obvious.

Yara: The reactions to this recording have come quickly. The following statements have been received by Cularin Central Broadcasting after we provided copies of the recording to key individuals throughout the system and beyond.

Interior, Almas Jedi Academy

Master Lanius Qel-Bertuk sits at his desk, hands folded beneath his chin. Responding to a cue we can't hear, he looks up at the holorecorder and speaks.

Lanius: There is no reason to mince words. Whatever else may have happened of late, the Jedi will fight to protect Cularin and her people. If Thaere believes they can kill all of us, they are sadly mistaken. If they believe they can kill all the Jedi, they are likely also mistaken. The Force will be with Cularin, Thaere will be defeated, and Cularin will be free once more.

Exterior, Hedrett Groundport

Governor Barnab Chistor of Gadrin and Senior Counselor Westa Impeveri of Hedrett stand side by side outside the entrance to the groundport. OPS officers flank them. Some of the officers watch the skies.

Chistor: If there is to be a final push made by Thaere, Cularin stands ready to meet it. OPS, working with the Militia, will repel any large-scale ground assault on the planet, just as we are certain the Jedi will repel any ground assault on Almas.

Impeveri: Thaere seems to believe that Cularin is weak. We are not now,

nor have we ever been, weak. While Governor Chistor and I may see differently on political matters, we agree that no invading force is going to destroy our homes or further endanger our people. We will not be leaving Cularin. We will stay and direct operations of our respective cities, doing everything in our power to ensure that whatever Thaere attempts, Cularin will retain the necessary leadership to survive and prosper.

Chistor: Our aides will remain with us. If either the Counselor or I should fall, there will still be those who can help to lead Cularin forward.

Interior, Militia Command Center

Commanders Osten Dal'nay and Broof Yurdel stand in front of a map of the Cularin system. Both wear their combat fatigues. Osten has a slow, deadly smile on his face. Part of Broof's face is bandaged, and a fresh-looking burn scar covers the right half of his neck.

Osten: The Cularin Militia stands ready to face any threat that might be posed by Thaere. We will continue to fight as we have fought them from our inception. They have never been welcome in Cularin, and never will be.

Broof: Wesa gonna take da bombad Daere and kick dem right outsa Cularin. Deysa never gonna know what hits dem! Wesa shown' da whole galaxy dat Cularin, she's not gonna die! No way, boss.

Osten: If Tramsig thinks he can walk into Cularin and blithely kill us all, he has another thing coming. However, you don't become an admiral, even in Thaere, without having your synapses firing most of the time. I ask all the people of Cularin to be on the lookout for suspicious persons or vehicles. Wholesale slaughter with blasters may not be what Tramsig and his goons have in mind. It's up to all of us to keep Cularin safe and to keep a watchful eye on our streets. We have experienced great tragedies in the past few months. Let's not give Tramsig the opportunity to visit an even greater tragedy upon us.

Interior, Senator Wren's Office, Coruscant

Senator Lavina Wren stands behind her desk, her cheeks bright red and her lips pressed together. She leans forward, arms stiff against her desk, her knuckles white from the pressure she's putting on them.

Wren: Citizens of Cularin, be strong. Know that I am doing all I can here on Coruscant, and that if Thaere tries anything as extreme as what is hinted at in this message, there will be consequences. By the time the forces of the Republic are done with them, it will be as if Thaere never existed. You have my word on this. May the Force be with us, Cularin.

Interior, Cularin Central Broadcasting Studios

Yara sits at her desk. She shuffles papers, looks at the prompter, and nods.

Yara: Clearly, there will be updates to this story as we obtain them. There is no way for us to know how old this recording is, or what the actual plans might be. We cannot even be sure who the second speaker is, though a

number of theories have already begun to surface in other outlets. As ever, Cularin Central Broadcasting will bring you further updates as they become available. We now return you to your regularly scheduled programming.